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Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MOPS VS
SUBJECT: COMMUNIST ATTACK ON TONG LE CHAN APRIL 11TH

REF: SAIGON 4764

1. THE APRIL 11 COMMUNIST ATTACK ON TONG LE CHAN FOLLOWED BY SEIZURE OF THE BASE REPORTED REFTEL CONSTITUTES AN EXCEPTIONALLY FLAGRANT AND DRAMATIC VIOLATION OF THE CEASE-FIRE. WE BELIEVE IT IMPORTANT THAT THE USG PUBLICLY EXPRESS ITS DISMAY AND OUTRAGE AT THIS NEWEST COMMUNIST BREACH OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT. DEPARTMENT WILL REMEMBER THAT TONG LE CHAN HAD BEEN UNDER CONTINUOUS SIEGE BY NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES SINCE LATE FEBRUARY 1973. ON ONLY ONE OCCASION, ON MARCH 25TH, 1973, WAS A TRUCE FOR EVACUATING THE WOUNDED PERMITTED BY THE COMMUNISTS, AND THAT LASTED ONLY TWO HOURS. SINCE THEN THE GARRISON HAS BEEN WHOLLY SUPPLIED BY AIR DROP AND THE WOUNDED HAVE HAD TO REMAIN UNDER FIRE IN THE BASE. THIS WITHOUT DOUBT IS AS HEROIC A DEFENSIVE ACTION AS ANY CHRONICLED DURING THE VIETNAMESE WAR. THE GVN FROM THE BEGINNING HAS ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE COMMUNIST INVESTMENT OF TONG LE CHAN. IN FACT THIS WAS THE OCCASION OF ITS FIRST NOTE TO THE PARTIES PARTICIPATING IN THE PARIS CONFERENCE ON VIET-NAM, ON APRIL 14, 1973.
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2. WE URGE THAT THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN AT THE PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 15 ISSUE A STATEMENT ON THE FALL OF TONG LE CHAN ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

3. THE UNITED STATES IS DEEPLY DISTURBED TO HEAR OF THE COMMUNIST ASSAULT ON AND SIEZURE OF THE REPLUBLIC OF VIET-NAM'S BASE AT TONG LE CHAN ON APRIL 11TH. THIS VIOLATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT BY NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS STANDS OUT AS ONE OF THE MOST FLAGRANT AND INEXCUSABLE SINCE THE CEASE-FIRE WENT INTO EFFECT. TONG LE CHAN HAD BEEN CONTINUSOUSLY HELD BY THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM FOR SEVERAL YEARS. IT PRESENTED NO CONCEIVABLE THREAT TO NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES;

BUT IT DID STAND IN THE WAY OF COMMUNIST EFFORTS TO EXPAND THEIR AREA OF CONTROL. WE NOTE THAT THE COMMUNISTS REPEATEDLY REFUSED GVN REQUESTS TO PERMIT EVACUATION OF THE WOUNDED. ON APRIL 2 AND SUB-SEQUENTLY THEY REJECTED A GVN REQUEST FOR AN INVESTIGATION AND LOCAL CEASE-FIRE AT TONG LE CHAN SUPERVISED BY THE ICCS AND THE TWO PARTY JMC TO PERMIT EVACUATION OF THE WOUNDED. NINE DAYS LATER, FOLLOWING AN EXTREMELY HEAVY ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENT, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES COMPELLED THE SURVIVING GARRISON OF SOME 260 TO WITHDRAW AND SEIZED THE BASE.

4. THIS ACTION CLEARLY BELIES HANOI'S STATEMENTS THAT ITS FORCES ARE FAITHFULLY ABIDING BY THE PARIS AGREEMENT AND SCRUPULOUSLY IMPLEMENTING THEE VIET-NAM CEASE-FIRE.
MARTIN

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